



South Carolina
Department of Education

Together, we can.

State Superintendent's Writing Awards Program 2009–2010

General Information

The purpose of this awards program is to support the teaching of the South Carolina Academic Standards and provide fifth and eighth grade students an opportunity to express themselves through the writing process. This is an optional program for districts.

Participating districts are to implement the program from September 2009 to January 2010 according to a timeframe established by the district coordinator that works best for them. It is suggested that students work on writing essays between September and December with scoring and judging done in January. Each district's winning essay and completed information are due in our office no later than **February 1, 2010.**

As the district coordinator, you will work with your fifth and eighth grade teachers to inform them of the essay topics, procedures, time sequence, and to assure that deadlines are met. Any information or questions regarding district matters should come through the district coordinator.

Each grade level will respond to one prompt only. Although choice is a crucial part of effective writing instruction, we must be able to equitably score essays. Therefore, all essays will be on the same topic for each grade level. Each year, the Office of Standards and Support will partner with other offices within the agency to create writing prompts on related topics. Writing prompts may require research of the topic.

All information regarding class, school and district winners will be collected via the web. Details regarding this process will be provided. The process will be similar to last year. All names will be submitted no later than **February 1, 2009.** We are encouraging students to utilize school technology to draft essays on the computer and provide essays electronically. District winning essays will be uploaded via the web for publication. **Please make certain each essay is in an editable format such as Microsoft Word. DO NOT SCAN A WINNING ESSAY TO UPLOAD TO THE WEB.**

The writing program will be highlighted at a statewide recognition ceremony in Columbia. Also a writing workshop will be held for students. Additional information will be provided in the spring.

Timeline

September	District coordinators will work with fifth and eighth grade teachers informing them of essay topics, time sequence and procedures.
September–January	Student writing, scoring and judging are completed.
February 1, 2010	Winning essays and student information are due from the district writing coordinator to the Office of Standards and Support via the SCDE web site.
February–March	Districts should print class, school, and district winners' certificates via the web site and awarded to students.
April	SCDE will compile all winning essays submitted and create a web-based student anthology.
TBD	The statewide recognition ceremony will be held in Columbia. District winners will receive their plaques.

Certificates

- Information will be submitted regarding the class, school and district winners via the SCDE website. Detailed instructions regarding this process will be sent in the spring.
- Each district will print their own certificates via the web for class, school and district winners. Certificates should be printed on card stock or certificate paper.
- District winning essays only will be uploaded via the website for a student anthology. Be sure to retain a copy of the essay in the school files and send one to the student's parent/guardian. **ONLY UPLOAD ESSAYS FOR STUDENTS WHOSE PARENTS HAVE SIGNED A PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM. PLEASE KEEP SIGNED FORMS AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE.** Permission forms are attached.
- The SCDE will provide plaques for district winners at the award ceremony.

Writing Procedures

- Essays must be written using the topics provided for each grade.
- Teachers should follow the writing process normally used in the classroom.
- Teachers should allow approximately 120 minutes for writing a draft copy and 120 minutes for writing the final copy. This process may be spread out

over several days, allowing writing on different days. Research regarding the topics is encouraged, allowing for approximately 120 minutes of research time.

- The use of computers for drafting essays is encouraged. ALL work must be done in the class with close supervision by the teacher. If there is a problem with students using technology to draft compositions, please contact Caroline Savage at csavage@ed.sc.gov and other accommodations will be made.
- Essays must be 250-400 words in length.
- Teachers and students must adhere closely to the Revised Extended Response Writing Rubric based on the 2008 English Language Arts Academic Standards. A copy is included.
- Because the winning district essays will be published, it is important that districts select essays of the highest quality, with appropriate content/development, organization and conventions.

Essay Topics

Choice is a crucial part of effective writing instruction within the classroom. However, to score essays equitably in a writing contest, they need to be on the same topic. Therefore, only one prompt per grade level is provided. The 2009–10 writing prompts focus on environmental education. The language arts teacher is not required to teach specific content around the topics. Students may research topics as needed to build background knowledge. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with content area teachers as appropriate to build interdisciplinary connections.

Fifth Grade: People's Influence on Other Living Things

Living things need good food, water, space, and shelter to survive. Explain how people's actions have affected, and limited, both animal and plant populations. What could you do to make it better for plants and animals to share the earth with you? Write a letter to your classmates on how they can be better environmental stewards?

Eighth Grade: People's Influence on Other Living Things

Animals and plants have become extinct due to man-made and natural causes. There is a large tract of untouched land available for development (small housing development and shopping center) in your area. This development would bring hundreds of jobs and help the economy in your community. However, it is also the habitat for several plant and animal species listed on the threatened or endangered species list. Write a letter convincing your County Council of your opinion on this issue.

Formatting Instructions

- All district winning essays should be in an electronic form.
- Use Verdana 11 point font and single spacing.
- Use standard 1 inch margins.
- The writing prompt title MUST be used as the title of each essay.
- Include the following heading in the CENTER of the page.
 - Name of School
 - Name of District (skip one line after the name of the district)
 - Student's Name (skip two lines after the name of the student)
 - Essay Title (This may be an original title or title within the prompt.)
- Skip one line and begin the body of the essay in on the second line after the essay title. Please double space.
- Do not include a cover page or any drawings, symbols or borders.

Scoring

Use the Revised Extended Response Writing Rubric approved by the SCDE for scoring. A copy is attached.

Judging Criteria

Class Level

- Each teacher is to select a winner for his/her classroom. If your school has more than one fifth and/or eighth grade classroom, a winner for Grade 5 and Grade 8 should be chosen using a judging panel similar to the one described under "School Level."
- Close attention should be given to content/development, organization, voice and conventions.
- Originality of work is crucial.

School Level

- A panel of at least three judges should select the school winner.
- One person from each of the following categories must be represented on the panel: parent, teacher, and business/civic leader.

District Level

- The district-level winner for Grade 5 and 8 will be selected from the winning essays submitted by participating schools.
- A panel of at least three judges should select the district winner for each grade level.
- One person from each of the following categories must be represented on the panel: parent, teacher, and business/civic leader.

Awards Levels

Class Level

One winner per participating classroom will receive a certificate signed by the State Superintendent of Education. Certificates will be printed by the district coordinator via the SCDE website.

School Level

One winner per participating school will receive a certificate signed by the State Superintendent of Education. Certificates will be printed by the District Coordinator via the SCDE website.

District Level

One district winner from grade 5 and one from grade 8 will receive a certificate printed by the district and a plaque from the State Superintendent of Education at the statewide awards ceremony in May and an invitation to the writing workshop.

Requests for Assistance

If you have questions, please contact Caroline Savage, State Coordinator for the Superintendent's Writing Awards Program at 803-734-4770 or csavage@ed.sc.gov.